ISSN 0712-2774

CEREBUS

GOING HOME

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235
OCT

MEMOIR

Okay, so it's a month or so later, and (evidently) Judy's birthday is coming up, and it is going to fall on a Tuesday. At this time I was going to Stages every Tuesday night for "rock 'n' roll" night. That lasted quite a while, and it was really the place and night that Mike and I became fast friends. When we started going in, there were about a dozen people, and by the time it came to an end (as everything does) the joint was packed. A good time.

Anyway, Judy let it be known around Peter's Place that she intended to get me into bed with her on her birthday. Let it be known widely enough that it got back to me. Stages was and is set up on four levels: the "upper deck" along the back wall, the second floor, the first floor and the stage (it's in a converted movie theater), and then the dance floor. I used to refer to it as the Four Inner Circles of Dante's Inferno. Anyway, I always hung out with Mike in the upper deck, so when I showed up, there was Judy. Mike didn't show up that night, which was not unexpected. Judy had, as they say, taken pains, and getting someone to distract Mike and keep him away was probably the easiest part of her scheme.

She looked pretty good. Must've lived on cottage cheese and cucumber for a couple of weeks, because she was easily a dress size smaller than usual. Low-cut blouse to show off her more-than-ample cleavage. Picture Elizabeth Taylor in her sleazy outfit in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*? She announced that she was buying my drinks all night. I said okay.

It didn't take much time to get down to it. As I recall, she accused me of being gay. That was a popular one with the "ladies" back in the early nineties. That one stood out in my memory because it was really only the second or third time it had been used on me. Then she went through the shopping list: I was afraid of intimacy, I was afraid of her, I didn't think I could measure up, I was intimidated by her intelligence, I wouldn't know what to do with a Real Woman. I listened to all of it very politely. I had no interest in going to bed with her, so it was all water off a duck's back to me. Finally, when she ran out of gas temporarily, I said, "You'll say anything to get me to go to bed with you."

She laughed and said, "You're right."

I told her that I had resolved to remain celibate through my thirty-third year as a tribute to Jesus. Which wasn't true — the fact that Jesus died when he was thirty-three was about all that I knew about him at the time, apart from what I picked up from Foolbert Sturgeon's *New Adventures of Jesus* comic books. Really, it was just my way of matching bullshit with bullshit of a different kind.

She kept it up for a good long while, snappy repartee, brushing her boobs against my upper arm. As I told her, it was like trying to pick up lint with a magnet. A magnet is a very powerful attractor, but it is of no use if you want to get lint off your jacket.

Finally, her eyes blazing, she looked me square in the eye and said, "Any man who is afraid of women is a wimp!"

I looked her square in the eye and said, "Any man who isn't wary of women is a fool."

I left shortly after.

Ding. Dave by a TKO.

CEREBUS

NO. 235 OCTOBER 1998

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GOING HOME

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(Cerebus 232 to Cerebus 265)

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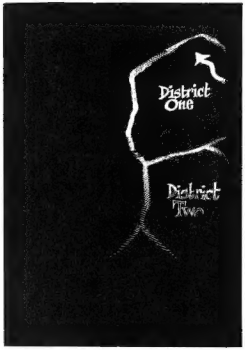
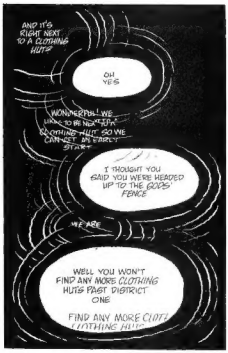
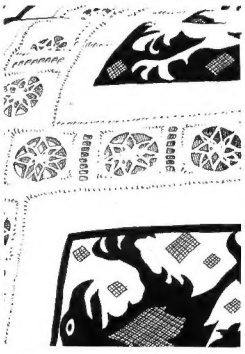
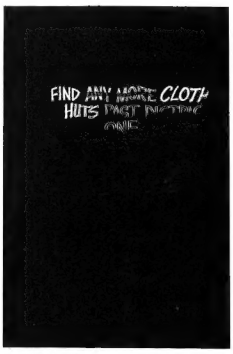
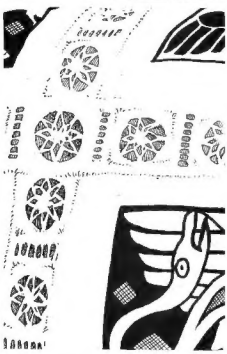

District One
District Four
District Five

Hsifan Bluffs
District Four
District Five

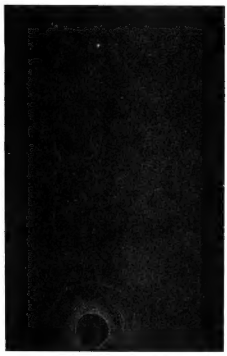

AND IT'S RIGHT NEXT TO A CLOTHING HUT!!
OH YES
WONDERFUL! WE HAVE TO BE NEAR THE BEGINNING HUT, SO WE CAN'T BE TOO FAR!
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WERE HEADED UP TO THE GODS' FENCE
WE ARE.
WELL YOU WON'T FIND ANY MORE CLOTHING HUTS PAST DISTRICT ONE
FIND ANY MORE CLOTH CLOTHING HUTS

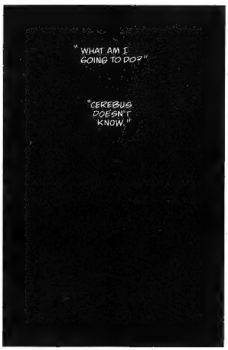


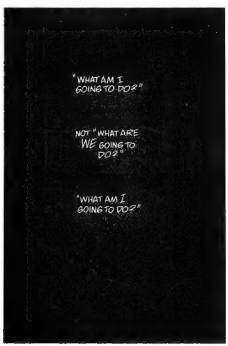

FIND ANY MORE CLOTH HUTS PAST DISTRICT ONE

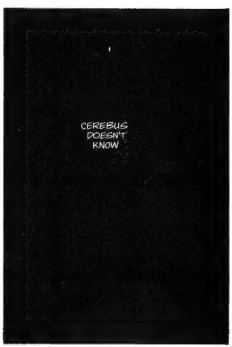


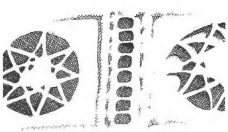
I can't stand wearing the same clothes two days in a row!

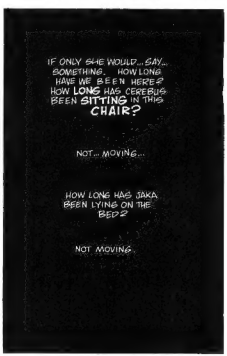



"WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?"
"CEREBUG DOESN'T KNOW."


"WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?"
NOT "WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?"
"WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?"


CEREBUG DOESN'T KNOW




IF ONLY SHE WOULD... SAY... SOMETHING. HOW LONG HAVE WE BEEN HERE? HOW LONG HAS CEREBUG BEEN SITTING IN THIS CHAIR?
NOT... MOVING...
HOW LONG HAS JAKA BEEN LYING ON THE BED?
NOT MOVING.

NOT MOVING

FOREVER

WE'VE BEEN HERE

FOREVER

MAYBE CEREBUS SHOULD SAY SOMETHING. BUT

WHAT? WHAT IS THERE TO SAY? "YOU WON'T FIND ANY MORE CLOTHING HUTS PAST DISTRICT ONE."

"I CAN'T STAND WEARING THE SAME CLOTHES TWO DAYS IN A ROW."

"YOU WON'T FIND ANY MORE CLOTHING HUTS PAST DISTRICT ONE."

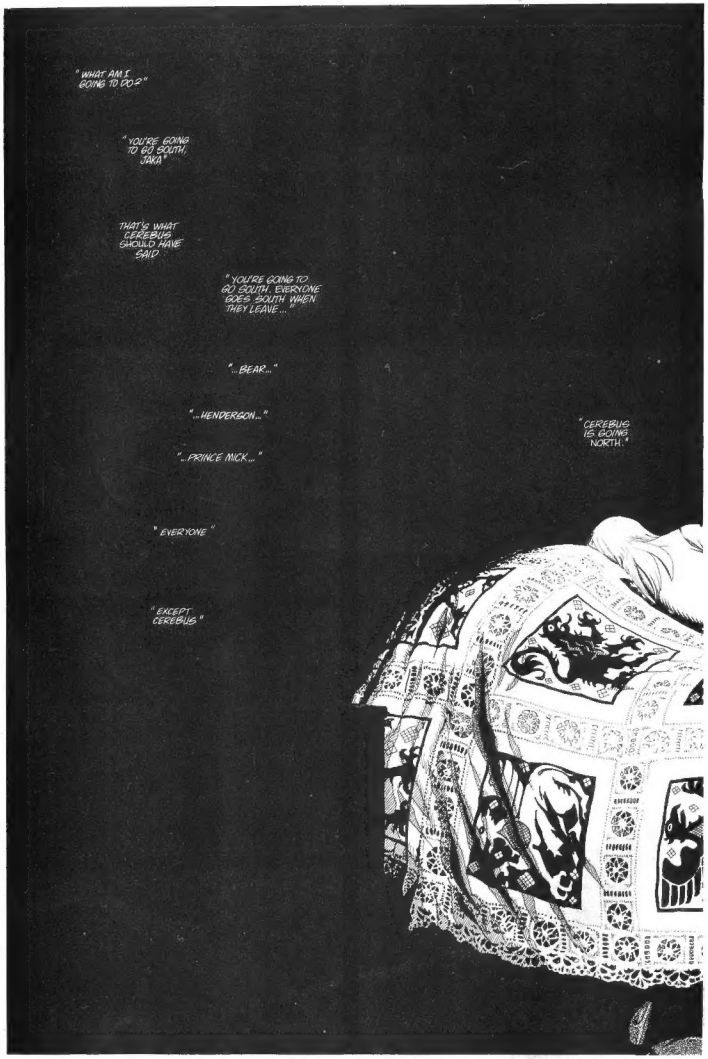
"THAT'S WHAT THE CIRINIST SAID."

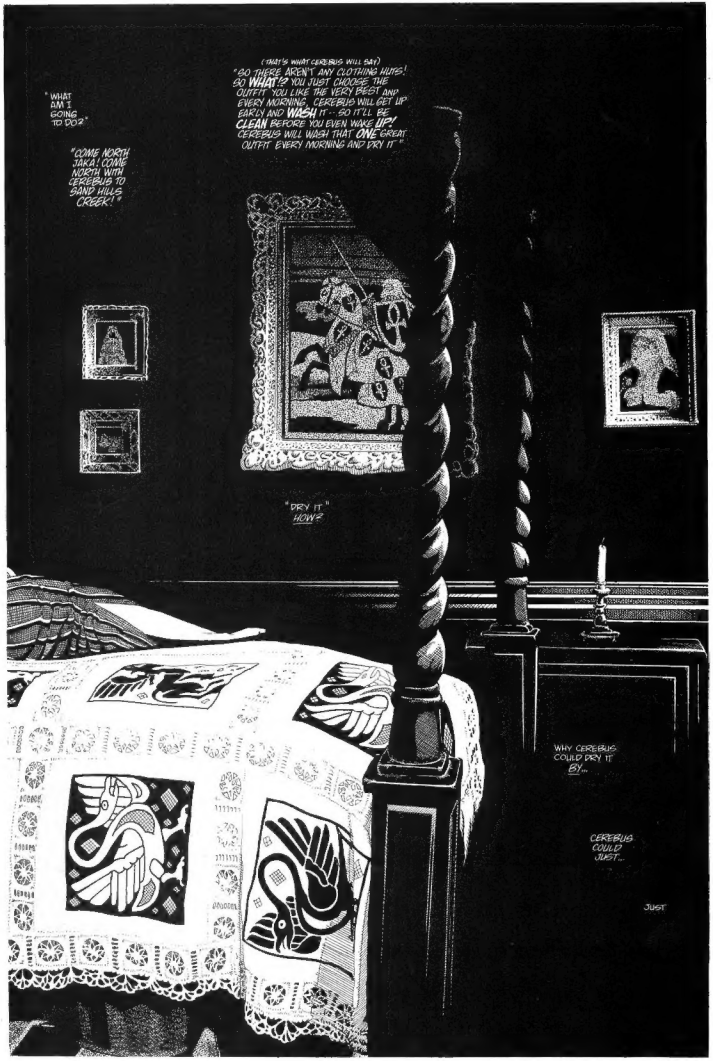
WHAT THE *MOTHER* SAID

JAKA SAYS YOU AREN'T SUPPOSED TO CALL THEM CIRINISTS

CEREBUS CAN CALL THEM CIRINISTS AGAIN.

AFTER JAKA LEAVES


"WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?"
"YOU'RE GOING TO GO SOUTH, JAKA"
THAT'S WHAT CEREBUS SHOULD HAVE SAID
"YOU'RE GOING TO GO SOUTH. EVERYONE GOES SOUTH WHEN THEY LEAVE..."
"...BEAR..."
"...HENDERSON..."
"...PRINCE MICK..."
"EVERYONE"
"EXCEPT CEREBUS"
"CEREBUS IS GOING NORTH."


"WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?"
"COME NORTH JAKA! COME NORTH WITH CEREBUS TO BIRD HILLS CREEK!"
(THAT'S WHAT CEREBUS WILL SAY)
"SO THERE AREN'T ANY CLOTHING HUTS! SO WHAT? SO YOU JUST CHOOSE THE OUTFIT YOU LIKE THE VERY BEST AND EVERY MORNING, CEREBUS WILL GET UP EARLY AND WASH IT -- SO IT'LL BE CLEAN BEFORE YOU EVEN WAKE UP! CEREBUS WILL WASH THAT ONE GREAT OUTFIT EVERY MORNING AND DRY IT."
"DRY IT" HOW?
WHY CEREBUS COULD DRY IT BY...
CEREBUS COULD JUST...
JUST

KNOCK
KNOCK KNOCK
YE EGGS?
YOUR MEALS ARE READY
JUST - JUST LEAVE THEM OUTSIDE THE DOOR PEASE
YES, PRINC... I MEAN... JAKA -
WILL THERE BE ANYTHING ELSE?
NO - NO THANK YOU
THAT'S ALL
YOU HAVE A NICE EVENING, NOW
THANK YOU - YOU TOO

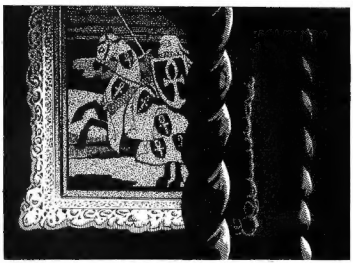
MAYBE CEREBUS SHOULD GET THE MEALS... CEREBUS ISN'T HUNGRY. AYE, BUT MAYBE JAKA IS. DOES JAKA LOOK HUNGRY? NAY...JAKA LOOKS...

JAKA LOOKS AS IF SHE'S TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO SAY

GOODBYE.

MAYBE CEREBUS SHOULD JUST LEAVE...

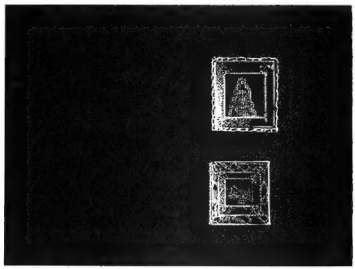
QUIETLY.



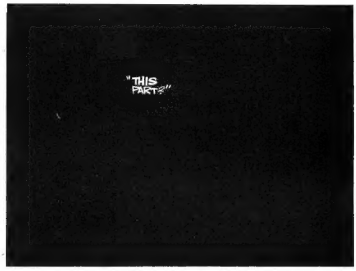
THIS IS JAKA'S ROOM. CEREBUS IS JUST... HER... COMPANION....

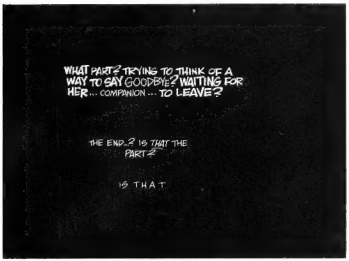
WAS

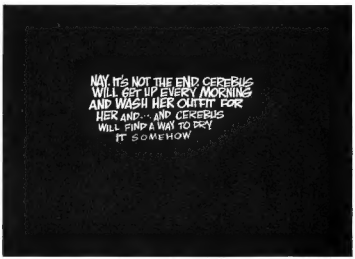
JUST... HER... COMPANION

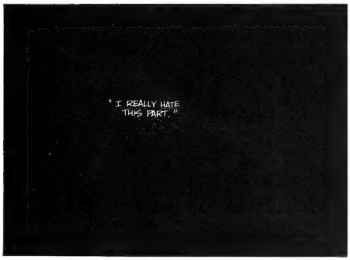


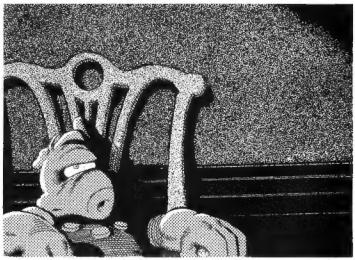
I REALLY HATE THIS PART

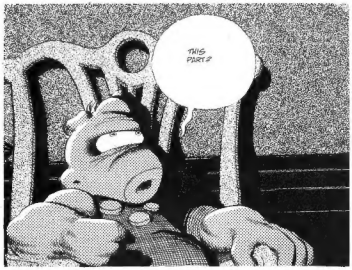

"THIS PART?"

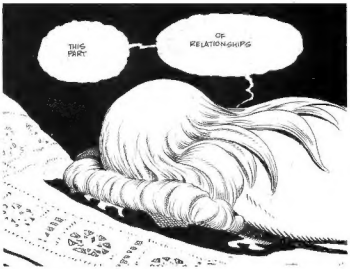

WHAT PART? TRYING TO THINK OF A WAY TO SAY GOODBYE? WAITING FOR HER... COMPANION... TO LEAVE?
THE END...? IS THAT THE PART?
IS THAT


NAY. IT'S NOT THE END. CERBERUS WILL GET UP EVERY MORNING AND WASH HER OUTFIT FOR HER AND... AND CERBERUS WILL FIND A WAY TO DRY IT SOMEHOW


" I REALLY HATE THIS PART."





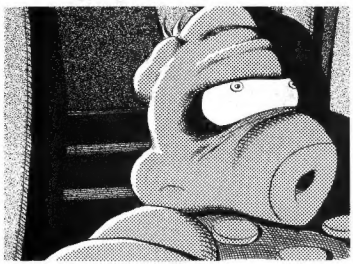


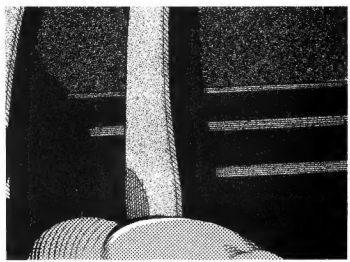
WHAT PART OF RELATIONSHIPS?

TRYING TO THINK OF A WAY TO SAY GOODBYE? WAITING FOR HER... COMPANION... TO LEAVE?

THE END? IS THAT THE

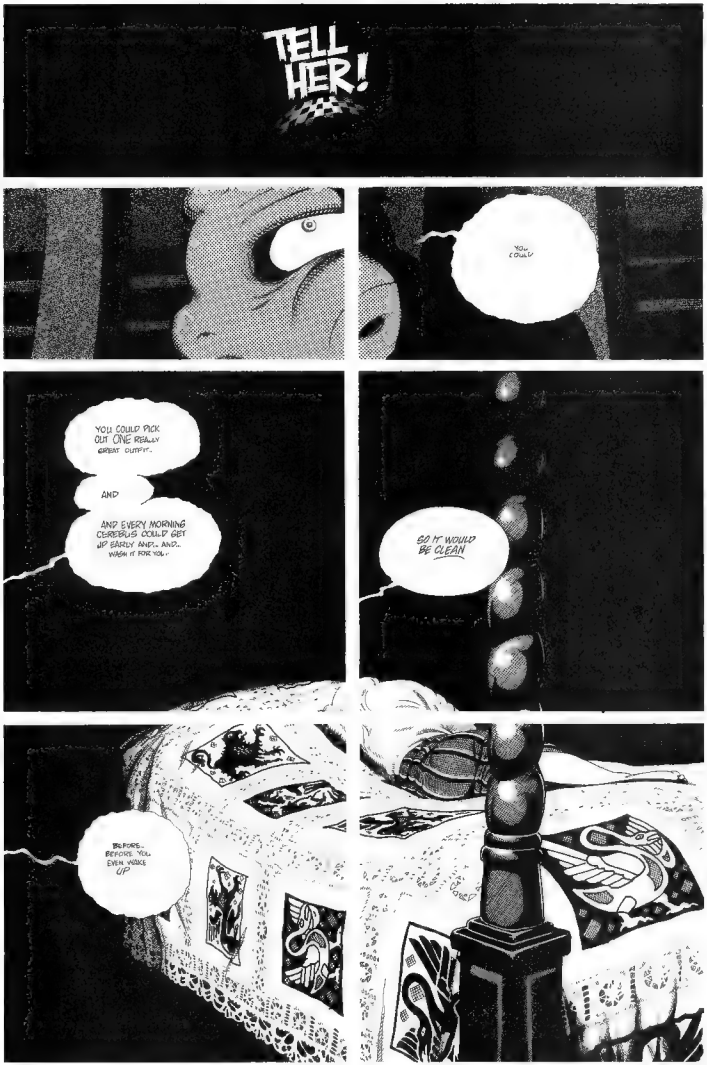
PART.



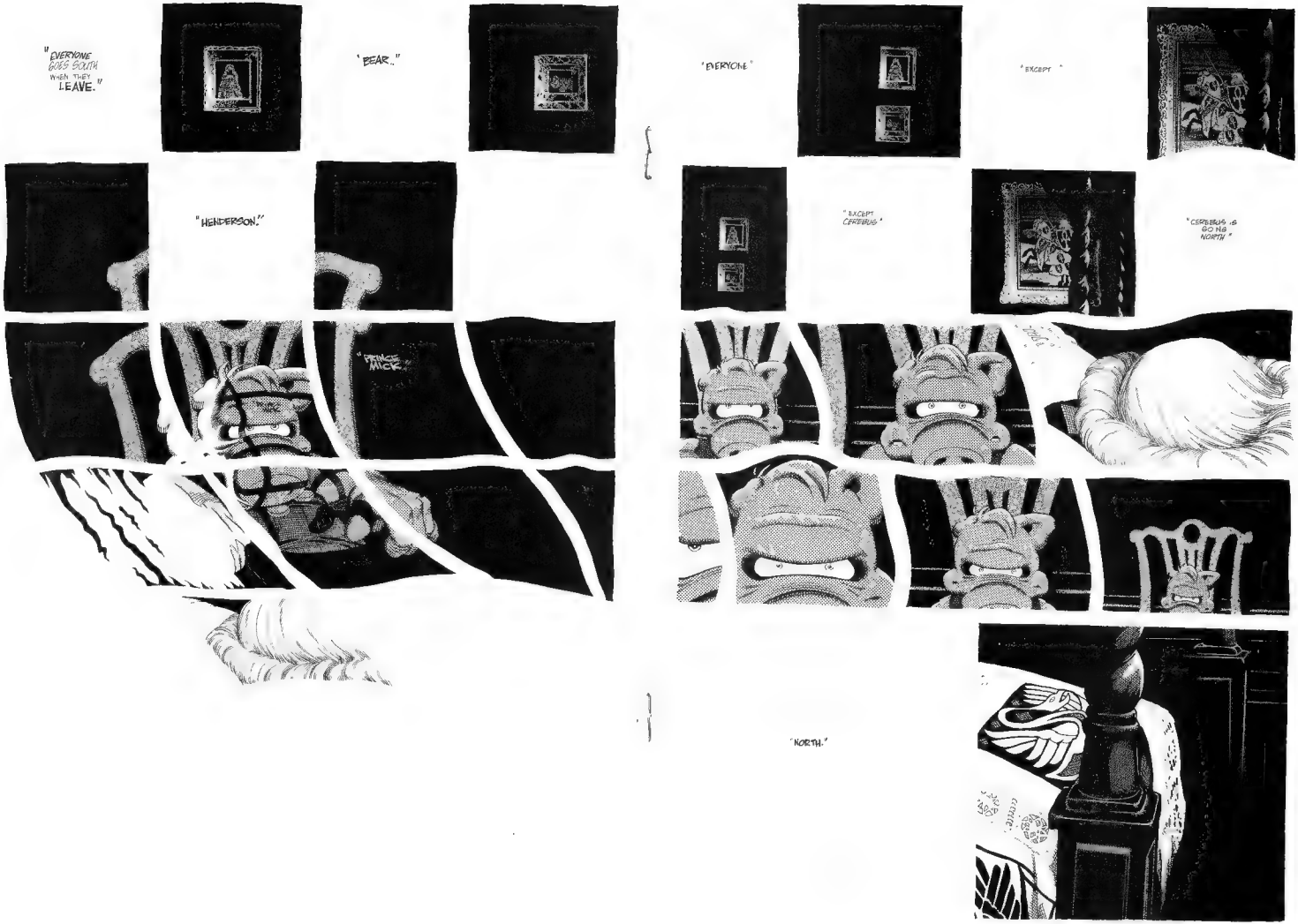


TELL HER! TELL HER CEREBUS WILL GET UP EVERY MORNING AND WASH HER OUTFIT FOR HER AND DRY IT

JAKA WILL KNOW A WAY TO DRY HER OUTFIT! JAKA KNOWS EVERYTHING ABOUT CLOTHES! SHE'LL TELL CEREBUS WHAT TO DO! TELL HER!

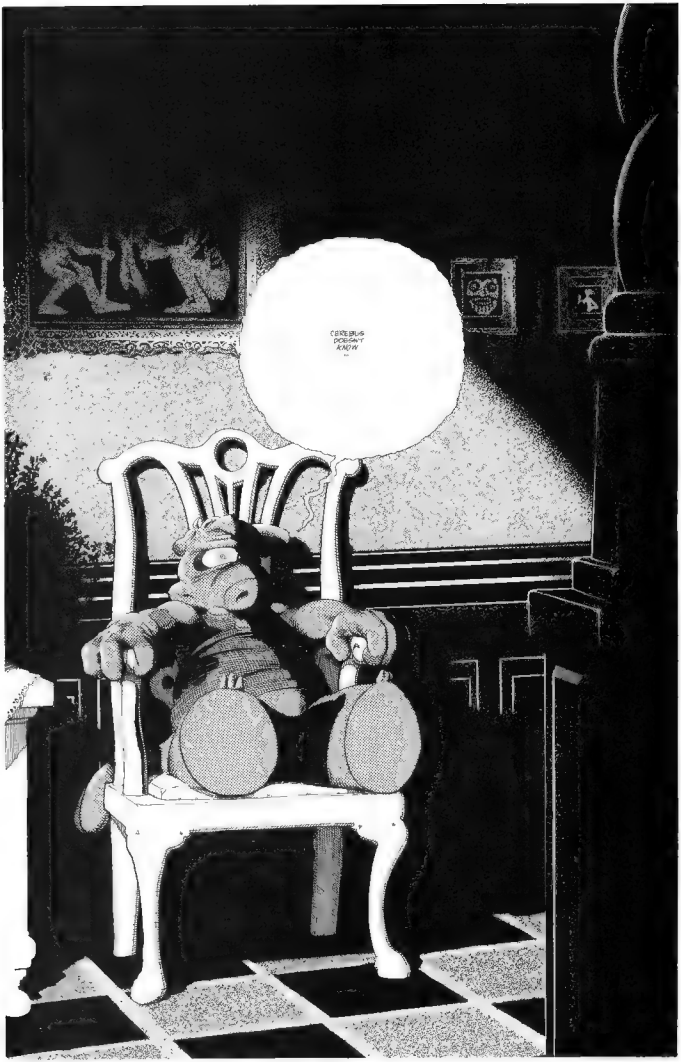

TELL HER!
YOU COULD
YOU COULD PICK OUT ONE REALLY GREAT OUTFIT..
AND
AND EVERY MORNING CERBERUS COULD GET UP EARLY AND.. AND.. WASH IT FOR YOU..
SO IT WOULD BE CLEAN
BEFORE.. BEFORE YOU EVEN WOKE UP

"BUT! HOW WOULD YOU DRY THEM?"
NO, I PROMISE!
IT'S NOT JUST THE CLEAN PART
THEY HAVE TO BE
DIFFERENT
CLOTHES
THEY JUST
HAVE
TO
BE
BUT
THANK YOU
I'LL MARK NO THE OFFER!
"DIFFERENT..."
CLOTHES
"WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?"
"YOU'RE GOING TO GO SOUTH JAKE."


"EVERYONE GOES SOUTH WHEN THEY LEAVE."
"BEAR."
"HENDERSON!"
"PRINCE MICE."
"EVERYONE"
"EXCEPT"
"EXCEPT CERBERUS"
"CERBERUS IS GO NO NORTH"
"NORTH."

SAND HILLS CREEK

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!


CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW ...

AARDVARK COMMENT

Dear Dave,

I found your response to Larry, in issue number 228, regarding super-heroes compelling. I find much of the faux nobility of super-heroes annoying at best. I felt you had a strong argument, so I won't elaborate.

Unfortunately, you fell into a really big hole in your religious example. You wrote, "I've been saying for some time that whether people believe God exists or not, if they all behaved as if He did exist, the world would be a much better place." Though this is a nice sentiment, it is historically inaccurate.

Atheists are a very small minority in the world. Most of the world's population believe in God. Much of the conflict today and in the past has nothing to do with lack of belief in God. From the pogroms against Jews in Europe during the Spanish Inquisition to the Muslim-Hindu conflict that resulted in the splintering of Pakistan and India into separate countries to the current long-standing crisis in the Middle East. Lack of faith has not been the problem. It is not a conflict over whether he exists but how we choose to worship him, who we believe to be the messengers of God, what are the central belief systems, etc.

Until we recognize the validity of all religious beliefs, or non-religious beliefs, the world will continue to be rife with religious tensions and conflict. It's a question of tolerance, not lack of faith. Furthermore, I find it questionable that, as a man of faith, you can presume to know the ethical and moral foundation (or lack thereof) of non-believers. When assessing the differing moral and ethical values of Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, or Jews, you can go to the influential writings and teachings of these religions. That is not the case with all faiths or with all non-believers. Your example, therefore, is an abstraction based on your supposition of what those ethical and moral values might be as well as how those who practice them might react to (or interpret) moral dilemmas.

For instance, it is conceivable that an atheist might assume that, in a state of nature, people are inherently flawed, make mistakes, have ethical lapses, etc. The question would then rest on how you chose to correct these transgressions. Since, in this state of nature, people are inherently flawed, it is illogical to suppose that we should hate ourselves for behavior that is abhorrent. Instead, we should recognize it, correct it, make amends for it, and move on.

You might also be interested in reading Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* where he argues against the concept of nobility/righteousness — a trait you find symptomatic of super-heroes.

"The judgement *good* does not originate with those to whom the good has been done. Rather, it is the *good* themselves, that is to say the noble, mighty, highly placed, and high-minded who decree themselves and their actions to be good, i.e., belonging to the highest rank, in contradiction to all that was base, low-minded, and plebeian... the origin of the opposites *good* and *bad* is to be found in the pathos of nobility and distance, representing the dominant temper of a higher, ruling class in relation to a lower, dependent one."

Sound familiar? He goes on to argue that this tendency is very evident in religious orders. In fact, differing conceptions of the good and bad are at the heart of religious conflict and tensions throughout history. In the Mideast conflict, both Jews and Muslims have taken the moral high ground regarding the conflict. Both claim to be on the side of good (or right) and claim the other is bad (or wrong). Regardless of how you characterize the conflict, it is rooted in religious and historical hatred. This is a tendency that is repeated again and again in religious conflicts around the world.

Evan Lewis

P.S. By the way, have you considered getting an e-mail address where people could write you? These days, once you get an ISP, it is easy to acquire multiple e-mail addresses that allow you to maintain a certain degree of anonymity and distance from fans much the same way a business address does.

Are you kidding? The fact that e-mail has caused the number of letters and faxes I have to deal with to taper off to almost nothing has probably been the biggest boon to my creative life in recent memory.

Well, to elaborate on my previous answer, the part of God that is within us, in my view, is tolerant. If you are intolerant, the God part of you is very far away from the pilot's seat of your conscious mind, in my view. As you can see, "in my view" is one of the centerpieces of my own philosophy. I don't believe in Allah or YHWH or Christ Jesus. I believe in the One God of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Whatever language you speak, in my view, if you have a word for "deity," just put a capital letter on it, and, well, that's Him.

I also believe it comes down to the individual and to the fact that as imperfectly as we know ourselves — we are completely and utterly clueless about anyone else. It's the reason I can't see any merit in the "Why does God let bad things happen to good people?" chestnut. I can't for the life of me see how you can determine that someone else is good or even "good," when it's impossible to know that about yourself. How can anyone pretend to know *that this person (that something bad happened to) is good or even "good," and from what "lofty" position is he or she judging the matter? I mean, who died and left him or her King or Queen? Even Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels when he was addressed as "Good master" said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God."(Matthew 19:17); "Why callest thou me good? There is no man good, but one, that is God"(Mark 10:18) — which I, personally, consider blasphemous*

phraseology, since it implies that God is a man — and "Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, that is God." (Luke 18:19) That, to me, seems to sum up the human dilemma pretty succinctly. If Jesus did not consider himself "good" or good, then I think all he was doing was trying to point us in the right direction: God is the only good, the only hope, the only possibility of salvation, of redemption, of us "getting" anywhere.

Religious factionalism, in my view, has so little to do with God as I conceive of Him that I wouldn't know where to begin to discuss it. I think it is just as easy to put the Protestant Church, the Catholic Church, the Nation of Islam, or any other structure or denomination as a barricade *between yourself and God as it is to use the structure or denomination as a* conduit *to Him. Where structures and denominations serve as barricades, in my view, blaming those barricades on God is ludicrous. Likewise with religious intolerance, pedophile priests, and all the gilded loot in the Vatican. I don't see how anyone can believe that those things came from God.*

I certainly watch a lot more religious programming than I did before, and I have to tell you that every time I hear an evangelist telling me what Jesus meant *by this saying or that parable, I really wince. You know? Not "Well, here's what I think he meant," but flat-out "Here's what he meant." You, as a Christian, believe that Jesus was God and you're completely at peace with throwing a metaphorical arm around his — sorry, His — shoulder, winking at the audience, and saying, "What my good buddy Jesus here was* trying *to say two thousand years ago..."? I'd be hiding under my bed for a week!*

Say, I'll bet all you nice atheists and agnostics out there are longing for the days when Aardvark Comment consisted of nothing but "She dumped me, Dave" letters. Let's see, we have to have a letter around here that doesn't talk about God. Ah!

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dear Dave,

It is quite strange.

Having bought a back copy of issue #36 today, to fill out my collection a little bit more, I enjoyed tugging the ol' h-strings once again.

Then, having read the letters and the (obsolete) publisher's note. I happened to glance at the date. *Sixteen years.*

And what do you get?

Well, you got another day older. I got another day deeper in debt.

But we got (and get) the opportunity to drop in at any time (issue #1, 47, 113, 146, 209, etc.) on an old friend as though it were just yesterday.

In other words, if I look at any other comic, especially any from the big 2, and if I'm looking at back issues, I know they're back issues. When I look at any issue of *Cerebus*, except for maybe the "Pentateuch" *(sorry, Jeff. I HAD to put quotes around it — Dave)*, I have to look at the date to get any feeling of nostalgia. Can I say..., continuity, son. Fittin' it all in, that is.

It's kind of like when I call old friends to whom I haven't spoken in months: "So then what happened?..."

Fondly,
Jeff Seiler
P.O. Box 93
Sedalia, MO 65302

Hey, there's a good example of "better you than me." Every once in a while I'll reread a couple of Aardvark Comments if I'm researching something in one of the back issues, and "Yucch" it goes back into the pile in a hurry.

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dave,

I hope you will forgive my liberty in addressing you by your first name, but as I have been sending my hard-earned money your way monthly for several years now, I think it is a small imposition.

Let me begin by saying that I enjoy your work very much. I will admit that I don't always get your point, and sometimes when I get it, I don't agree with it. However, I do find that your book is the one monthly book that I consistently anticipate reading each month, and it has been the only title I have carried without fail, even when I have been buying nothing else. Your commitment to a quality product and your singular vision have meant that I, as a reader, get a continuously high level of enjoyment from your work. Your success on your own terms has been an inspiration to me, as an artist, writer, and hopeful self-publisher, in demonstrating to me that this kind of work can be done profitably without compromising one's basic principles.

Further to this last thought, let me say a loud "Thank you" for your articles on self-publishing. These have helped to answer many of the questions I have about the basics of the industry (a special "thanks" for the piece on Diamond) and have also caused me to analyze my own goals as a comics artist, which has led to a clearer definition of the way I want my own vision brought to reality. I honestly think that your *Guide to Self-Publishing* should be, for comics hopefuls, required reading along with those marvelous books published by Messrs. Eisner and McCloud. It may be blind optimism, but I think that it will just be a matter of time before we see the positive effect your example has on the entire comics industry.

It is because of this high regard for you and your work that I find it necessary to respond to your most recent issue of *Cerebus, #228*. To be specific, I am referring to your answer to Larry Hart's letter, a.k.a. *Mama's Boy*, part three. One of the characteristics which initially drew me to your book, and which keeps me coming back, is your sternly rational perspective on all things, from your work to the letters you receive from readers such as myself. Whether you are being humorous, cynical, or simply adamant about a subject, I have always been reassured that yours is a rational voice which maintains a proper relationship between reason and emotion and which does

not seek to make a point or win an argument without support from solid logic and facts. As I noted earlier, I don't always agree with your conclusions, but at least I always have to admit the strength of your argument. Through reading your readers' responses to you, I have observed that many others share this respect for your rationality. While this in no way obligates you to shape your opinions to maintain this status with your audience, it does mean when you make a point or voice an opinion, there are people out there who are taking it seriously. Therefore, when a contradiction is obvious in your thinking, or when you make a statement which does not seem to have been derived rationally, it becomes necessary to question your judgement publicly in order to attempt to counteract the potentially dangerous effects of your wrong thinking.

To finally get to the point, I would like to refer you to the next-to-last paragraph of your response to Mr. Hart's letter. You state therein that the "rightest" use of an individual's (the fantasist's) expendable income (the theoretical $5.00) is to give it up to another person on the basis of his need (the homeless person). I quote: "As right as you can be: all five bucks and walk home." I agree with your later point that the choice as to what amount (if any) is given to the homeless person is an ethical choice, in that the decision made will determine the relative values of the person who owns the money. However, there is no obvious substantiation of your statement that the correct ethical choice is to give up all the money. Dave, I am surprised that as clear a thinker as yourself did not see the dangerous principle underlying this statement and the effects thereof. A few paragraphs earlier, you refer to "Trade unionists, communists, socialists, and reformers of all kinds" as representative of "oppression and suppression," in the sense that the genuine aspirer has to find a way around these obstacles. I agree. However, it is because of such implicitly oppressive statements such as the one made by yourself that it is necessary for the aspirer to go further out of the way to surpass the obstacles. I won't insult you by saying, "Surely you didn't mean it," and I realize that it is only your opinion that was being stated, an opinion which is completely your right to hold and express. However, as this opinion was stated in the form of an imperative, I think it is necessary to challenge it on a rational basis. In that paragraph, you align yourself with the trade unionists, communists, and socialists (at least for that moment) by accepting and propagating the basic principle of their ilk: that need is the standard of the good, and by that standard, the efforts of those who have are to be offered wholly to the claims of those who have not. For you to state that the person who has five dollars is ethically obligated to give it up to the person who does not have it is to explicitly state that regardless of how that five dollars was obtained, by theft or by an hour's hard work, the person who owns it has no right to it if someone who has not obtained it wants to make a claim to it. Since that five dollars is representative of the efforts of the person who owns it, then by allowing that the homeless person has a greater claim to it, you devalue those efforts and put the work of the owner at the disposal of the homeless person and consequently put the life of the owner in the service of the person who wants to make a claim to him. This might sound like a ridiculous extreme, but bear in mind I am asking you to keep principles in mind here, as it is our principles which govern our actions and which hold true whether the amount in question is five dollars or a person's entire fortune. The only basis you propose for the acceptance of this ethical standpoint is the need of the homeless person, with no attempt to prove that the person is justified in any way to make that claim, thereby accepting the principle that no justification is necessary and that the owner of the money is morally obligated to the homeless person, a person whom he may never have met and about whom he may know absolutely nothing. By extension of this principle, your statement means that each of us is obligated to every other person to the extent of the amount we are able to produce by our efforts, and that those who produce or own wealth are indebted to those who do not by the amount that they produce or own; all wealth, regardless of what a person may have to do to produce or earn it, should be given up to be shared equally with those who (by choice or by circumstance) do nothing to produce or earn it. Sounds a lot like socialism to me, Dave...or does no one remember "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need"?

What are the eventual effects of this statement? I think, on an immediate practical level, they are twofold. First, the person who has not is taught that he has to make no effort to have, as it will be given to him anyway. Therefore, there is no reason or encouragement to make an effort to earn as one can always claim the unearned. This is the principle we are seeing in action today, much to the detriment of the Canadian economy. Being originally from Newfoundland, I have seen firsthand and repeatedly the effects of this, as they now have entire communities filled with able-bodied, intelligent people whose greatest aspiration is a government check as well as a capital city which is rapidly in decline due to the lack of ingenuity on behalf of its citizens to attempt to discover forms of industry in the sudden absence of the traditional way of life.

Secondly: the person who has been taught that he cannot possibly profit from his efforts, as any profit he gains he is duty-bound to give away (or have taken away by force, which is the political implementation of this ethical rule. See: income tax), and the more he makes the more he has to give away. This creates a sense of futility in achievement and industry and discourages effort and productivity. I'll refer you here to the ongoing Microsoft anti-trust travesty, which, as far as I can determine, makes a clear statement that you can compete, but can do so no better than your competitors, or your ability to compete will be taken away. Why bother?

In the end, a sort of social leveling is accomplished, as everyone will be equated on the level of their apathy towards life, those with ability being discouraged from using it, and those without ability being protected from the consequences of their own failures. No one overachieving, no one underachieving, just nice, peaceful mediocrity across the board. But at least no one's homeless. (See: Communist Russia. Now, that worked, didn't it?)

Please understand, I have nothing against an individual act of charity, and if you want to give your five dollars to a homeless person, or if you want to start handing out

copies of *Jaka's Story* at soup kitchens, I will not object. What I do object to is being told that I have to give away *my* five dollars because someone else decided it is my ethical obligation to do so. I don't even have a bone to pick with the homeless as such, as I am aware that everyone has his story, some being justified and some not. I do, however, have a bone to pick with a political system which encourages people not to be productive by allowing them easy access to the products of my efforts. I make no such claim of any other person, and I expect no other person to make such a claim on me.

Am I nit-picking here, taking a simple statement and blowing it out of proportion? I don't think so. As I write this, we are a few days away from a provincial election, and I am both frightened and appalled at the threat that the NDP might actually get in power in this province. To see this socialist-based political party grow in power represents to me something gross and fearful about the current economic and political situation, as well as about the mentality on which people are operating. I think this sort of philosophy flies in the face of a truly free society and, for purely selfish reasons (defining selfishness as a rational thing. See: Ayn Rand… as if you weren't just waiting for that), I do not want to see the country in which I live turn completely into a nation of mediocrities. This is why, when I read the sort of statement you made from someone whose thinking I respect, I think it necessary to attempt to correct the error so that it will not be compounded, or at the very least, not propagated. I would obviously like you to print this letter, if you have the room, to serve as a counterpoint to your own opinion. I realize that if you do, it will probably be with your own unique commentary, but that is an arena I will gladly step into. I don't expect you not to defend your opinions, just to realize that they may, from time to time, be challenged.

Thanks for listening, and once again, thanks for *Cerebus*.

Sincerely,
Dominic

Oh, you're quite welcome.

I would side with Islam in its view that alms-giving is a benefit — make that Benefit — to the alms-giver. Although it is a central theme, to me, of the Books of the Prophets and the Gospels, it doesn't seem quite as overt and emphatic until it shows up in the Koran.

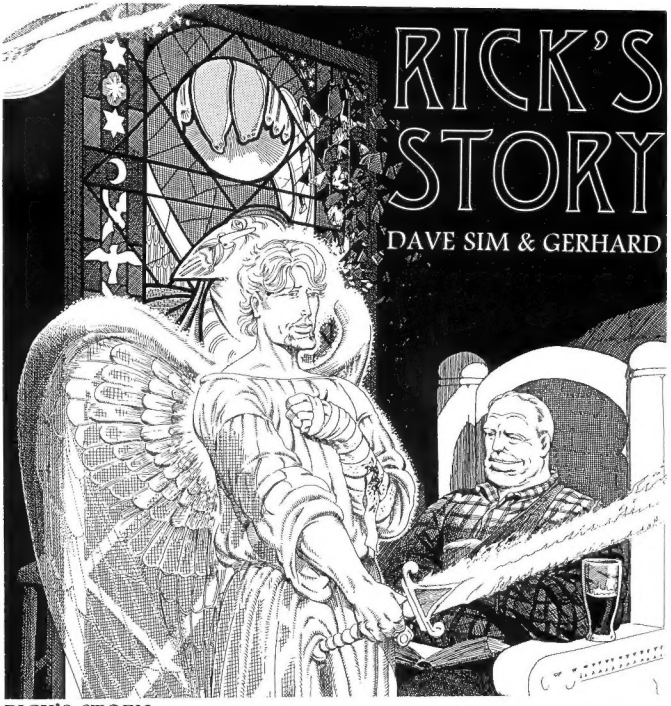
I'll repeat here, as well, that this is all just my opinion. It is also the opinion of someone who has way too much walking-around money. It doesn't matter how much I give to the local food bank or the local soup kitchen or to panhandlers on the way to and from work, I always think that it isn't enough. Always. Remember the McCartney song, "Band on the Run"? "Gonna give it all away / To a registered charity" I bet Paul thinks about that a lot. Even giving half away or three-quarters away. To me, the part of me that won't seriously consider doing that, the part of me that gives $20 to a panhandler when I have $100 in my pocket, is a part of me that I am very much ashamed of. I mean, panhandlers are pretty happy when you give them $20, but that in no way excuses what I see to be the... ethical inadequacy?... of my own choice.

Especially if I have my ATM card with me. I can take it as a given: Hey, I've got to have a little money for myself in my pocket. You know, I was just on my way to pick up something for supper, I need smokes, I need milk and orange juice. Well, that's not a hundred bucks worth of need *no matter which way you slice it. I could buy all those and give him (or her) sixty bucks easy. I can get another sixty bucks by stopping at an ATM on the way. The person standing in front of me can't. If I were a believer in psychiatry (which I'm not, but if I were), I'd almost be tempted to describe my condition as ethical neurosis. To the degree that it is at variance with how most normal or "normal" or Normal people think, I am a real wacko. Fortunately, that's nothing new to me.*

I'm pretty sure I covered my view (last issue? The one before? — they all run together, Aardvark Comment-wise, I'm afraid) that the G-7 countries are able to keep going because they have institutionalized care for the elderly, the infirm, the widows, the orphans as part of the tax structure, so let me be a little more specific:

Speaking as a Canadian, we all know the statistics — Canadians are the most heavily taxed citizens of any industrialized nation. Canadians also have more savings, as a rule, than the citizens of any industrialized nation. I am being only slightly ironic here when I suggest that the NDP (New Democratic Party, Canada's socialists, for all you furrinners tuning in) is God's way of telling us that we are not being personally generous enough or institutionally generous enough to the genuinely needy when they (the NDP) are elected to govern anywhere in the country. "If you would rather, as Ontarians, keep your bank accounts full than even make an effort to feed and clothe the destitute, well, fine, here's your new Ontario Premier — Bob Rae — who is going to strip-mine your bank accounts in the name of every crackpot socialist cause you can imagine in your wildest dreams, and he's going to do that with impunity for four years. Don't be so stingy and stupid when it comes to those who are in genuine need, and maybe the next guy will go a little easier on financing the 'Womyn's Anger Studies' and related bullshit when he gets his turn."

On a personal note, Dominic, I'm really not getting on your case with this. It may have come across that way, but, believe me, I'm just as likely (more likely, now that I think about it) to judge myself as an ethical neurotic as I am to judge anyone else as being anything else. It does seem to me that every country that has ever existed and has prospered has invariably arrived at a point where its citizens take prosperity for granted. Not only take it for granted, but whine about its insufficiency. Until the stock market crashes or something like that, which seems to be the only time the pampered citizenry acknowledge prosperity — in retrospect. My theory — that personal and institutionalized generosity towards the genuinely needy is the source of prosperity — is (I admit it) just *a theory. But over the long haul I would stack it up against whatever it is the professional economists are selling these days as holy writ.*



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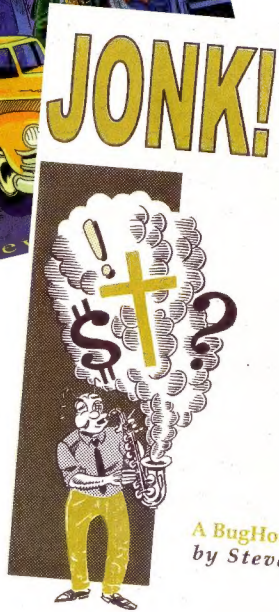

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